Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region Four Headquarters
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405
(406) 454-5840

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT DECISION NOTICE FOR PROPOSED NEW BOAT CAMP IN SMITH RIVER STATE PARK & RIVER CORRIDOR

January 7, 2010

Description of Proposed Action: Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes to establish a new boat camp near the confluence of Deep Creek within the Smith River State Park river corridor. The addition of another boat camp on the Smith River will give floaters a new overnight camping location, helping to disperse floater groups between boat campsites, and improve boat camp satisfaction.

The site is located approximately at mile 39 of the 59-mile Smith River float (from Camp Baker to Eden Bridge), between the Parker Flat (river mile 37.9) and Paradise Bend (river mile 39.5) Boat Camps. The proposed new boat camp would be near an area that has been a popular day-use spot by floaters for many years where Deep Creek flows into the Smith River.

The location selected for the new boat camp is part of a larger parcel known as the Deep Creek Conservation Easement that was approved in 2007. Under the terms of the easement, FWP is authorized to develop one or two boat camps on the property subject to the approval of the property owner.

Public Process and Comments: A draft Environmental Assessment proposing this action was posted on May 20, 2009 in the Recent Public Notices section of the FWP website. Legal notices were published in the *Great Falls Tribune*, *Helena Independent Record,* and *Meagher County News.* Printed copies of the EA were mailed to adjacent landowners, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Cascade and Meagher County Commissioners. Copies of the EA were placed in the Region 4 Headquarters lobby and FWP offices in Helena for public review. Public comments were accepted through June 9, 2009.

A total of three (3) public comments were received, two of which were supportive of the proposed action and one of which raised a related concern but did not oppose the boat camp. In addition, one agency comment was received from the U.S. Forest Service, which was highly supportive of the proposed action.

A concern was raised about the viability of requiring human waste to be packed out from this campsite, due to the fact that other boat camps currently do not have that requirement. FWP believes this will not be an issue for those floaters who are already accustomed to and equipped to pack out human waste and/or for those who voluntarily elect to pack out human

waste for their entire float trip. For those not willing to do so, there are two other choices for boat camps within 1 river mile of this site.

Decision: Based on the Environmental Assessment and public comment, it is my decision to approve the proposed action and develop the Deep Creek Boat Camp on the Smith River. Site improvements will include a boat camp sign, boat tie off posts, and the installation of a steel fire grate. No pit toilet will be installed and human waste must be packed out from this campsite. Floaters wishing to camp in this new site will require a Smith River Floater Permit and must request this site during the floater registration process at Camp Baker.

In accordance with FWP policy any person who has either commented in writing to the department on the proposed project, or who can provide new evidence that would otherwise change the proposed plan may make an appeal. An appeal must be submitted to the Director of FWP in writing and must be postmarked or received within 30 days of this decision notice. The appeal must describe the basis for the appeal, how the appellant has previously commented to the department or participated in the decision-making process, and how the department can provide relief. The appeal should be mailed to: Director, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1420 East 6th Avenue, Helena, MT 59620.

Woody Baxter

Woody Baxter
Region Four Parks Manager, Acting